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## EDITORIAL NOTES

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Mr. Mirick's article in the present number of the *Elementary School Teacher* raises in a very concrete way a number of questions regarding promotion which are of vital importance to every member of the school system. The interest of the superintendent and principal is so obvious that it calls for no comment. The individual teacher cannot do her work successfully if the children in the class are so different in maturity and previous equipment that they cannot work together. The backward child is discouraged; the forward child learns habits of neglect and forms a false estimate of the importance of all intellectual tasks. The parents are dissatisfied with the associations into which the child is brought, and are critical of a system which holds a child back for reasons which do not tally with the evident needs of the child.

The fundamental difficulty in this matter as in many of the other aspects of educational organization is the lack of any clear guiding principles underlying practice. The individual teacher sometimes recommends promotion not because of any clearly statable reasons; or, what is worse, the teacher recommends the holding back of a child on the weakest of pretexts. Thus, some teachers undoubtedly recommend that a given child go forward when their patience and resources are exhausted. They have perhaps done all that they can for the child in question and look upon promotion as a device for putting an end to what seems to be fruitless effort. On the other hand, some teachers hold children back unduly because they wish to avoid criticism from the teacher next above. They send forward only those children of whom they are perfectly sure, so that the next teacher may be impressed with the proficiency of the preparation given in the lower grade. Such reasons as these are seldom stated in these bald terms and they are certainly not generally acceptable when put in this form.

Another serious defect in the promotion system is to be found

in the fact that practice, even within the bounds of a single school building, is not uniform. The principal may intend to supervise the school in such a way as to make all promotions on the same basis, but he does not know the pupils intimately, and his information from the teachers differs in value and differs in the expectations which lie back of each teacher's personal judgments. If the principal cannot judge accurately, certainly the superintendent cannot. The only hope of securing uniformity is to begin a full study of the matter involving every school and every teacher.

It requires some courage to face all these facts as is done in the Indianapolis system. Most school officers are timid about admitting that they have ever made mistakes. Of course, the Indianapolis schools have been no more guilty than other systems. So far, however, this system has been the first to take up for its own sake, and incidentally for the sake of other school systems, a systematic study of the whole problem. Furthermore, this system is in advance of others in opening up a rational and carefully organized experiment to correct the evils discovered, and to study the effects of newer, and what seem to be better, practices.

Reform is significant wherever it is conscientiously made. The difficulty with most reforms, however, is that there is no adequate evidence on which to base a judgment either of the needs of reform or its effects. Here is a most significant change in practice backed up by a clear-headed statement of the reasons for the change and by a series of investigations that make it possible to evaluate with perfect precision the outcome. Such reform rises to the level of scientific organization. That a great system of schools, recognized as one of the most efficient in the country, should give an example of scientific organization such as we have here is a matter of congratulation. Others of less courage and initiative will undoubtedly be induced to follow this example. Mr. Mirick's report is a long step in advance in the administration of schools. He and his associates in that city, as well as their former leader, Mr. Kendall, have done a large public service in this study.